

Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox
Greek Catholic Church
(Now Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox
Greek Catholic Cathedral)
1121 North Leavitt Street
(southeast corner of North
Leavitt and West Haddon Streets)
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1071

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
71-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
801 - 19th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.

HOLY TRINITY RUSSIAN ORTHODOX GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH
(Now Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Cathedral)

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
71-

Location: 1121 North Leavitt Street, (southeast corner of North Leavitt and West Haddon Streets); Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: Congregation of the Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Cathedral.

Present Use: Cathedral and Parish Church.

Statement of Significance: The church is a late work by Louis H. Sullivan in traditional and exotic ecclesiastical idiom.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lots 26, 27, 28, 29 [including rectory] in Subdivision of the south part of Block 2 in Suffern's Subdivision of the southwest one-quarter Section 6, 39, 14. Recorded May 18, 1888.

According to the chain of title in Book 438B, pp. 333-34, the property was purchased from the surviving executors of Thomas Suffern by the Holy Trinity Congregation of the Russian Greek Orthodox Church and recorded October 26, 1899 (Document 2885795). The title has remained in the hands of the Congregation and its representatives to the present.

2. Date of erection: 1902-03.
3. Architect: Louis H. Sullivan.
4. Builder, suppliers, etc.: W. T. and W. I. Clark, contractors; painted decorations by Millets (?) [see supplementary material, letter of 17 August 1904]; sheet metal work by Ferwell Cornice Co. [Letter of 8 October 1904]. Cost of building \$27,104.37 [Statement of Contract and Payments, 26 August 1903].
5. Original plan and construction of building: There is no record of the original Building Permit in the Chicago Department of Buildings.

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Sullivan's rendering for the church and adjacent rectory was shown at an exhibit of the Chicago Architectural Club which opened at the Art Institute on 25 March, 1901. The following description is from an article on the exhibition in the Chicago Record Herald, March 31, 1901:

"A colored drawing that is calculated to arouse criticism is one by Louis H. Sullivan for an orthodox Russian Church. It is thoroughly Russian in character, and the exterior is painted in polychromatic colors, its domes embellished with gold. The color which runs from ultramarine to red, is to be applied to plaster. It is to be hoped that this structure will soon blossom forth like a flower amid somber surroundings, and do for a city street what Mr. Sullivan's superb Transportation Building did for the Columbian exposition."

The location of the original rendering is unknown, although there are photographs of it in the Burnham Library. The rendering includes the existing rectory to the south. While it is unlikely that the large, boxlike house was designed by Sullivan, it appears that he intended it to be decorated in the manner of the church. Presently, the rectory shares the soffit patterning of the church and is related to it in its light grey plaster coloring, as well as by an iron fence with large concrete corner posts.

The rendering indicates that the smooth plaster walls were to be colored and large areas decorated by super-imposed painted tracery. The designs below the front gable of the rectory are more in the Sullivan manner than those of the church, which recall Moorish and Byzantine prototypes. The overall effect of the church decoration would have been to carry the delicate patterns of the tower and dome lattice-work, as well as the ornament over the door and surrounding the windows, onto the flat surfaces.

Sullivan's business letters [see Supplementary Material] indicate his immediate concern for the completion of the decoration. From his letter of 17 August 1904, and 8 October 1904, we may surmise that the exterior polychromy was executed to some extent. Presently, there are traces of yellow paint in the recesses of the ornament over the front door, however, both church and rectory are now a uniform light gray with only the interior stencil work and paintings, suggesting the coloristic richness that might have been realized on the exterior.

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According to Rev. Emilian Solanka, the interior furnishings, icons, and iconostas were brought from Russia when the church was built. He also suggested that the church design is based on an existing model in Siberia; it does, in fact, bear a general resemblance to wooden churches in northern Russia.

6. Additions and alterations: The rectory entrance has been enclosed and was originally approaches through a high-arched, open entry. With the exception of the drum of the dome, the church was re-stuccoed with a rough-textured surface within the past ten years.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The parish was founded in Chicago in 1892. According to an unidentified newspaper clipping of 24 October 1942 on the 50th Anniversary of its Founding:

"The first Russian church in Chicago was erected at Center and Madison streets. Later the Rev. John Kockuroff, a native of Russia, bought the present site. Chicago Russians were aided in building the edifice by the late Czar Nicholas who contributed 5,000 rubles."

In October of 1952, the Jubilee of the dedication of the church was celebrated.

Rev. Solanka reports that the original parish church was visited by Russian worshippers during the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893.

C. Bibliography:

Chicago Art Institute Scrapbook 14:14,22, March 1901 - December 1901. Microfilm in Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago.

Contains articles from the Chicago Record Herald, March 31, 1901, which report a current exhibition by the Chicago Architectural Club which included Sullivan's color rendering for Holy Trinity.

Copy Book of Business Letter of Louis H. Sullivan, April 2, 1903 - January 9, 1905.

Original manuscripts microfilm in Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago. Letters concerning St. Trinity Greek Orthodox Russian Church, Chicago. pp. 141, 143, 156, 246, 304, 374.

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Hall, Thomas Randolph. "The Russian Community of Chicago,"
Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the Year
1937. Springfield: The Illinois State Historical Society,
1938. pp. 102-108.

Photograph of rendering and newspaper clippings of interior
views filed under Chicago, Russian Holy Trinity Cathedral
Church in the pamphlet file of Burnham Library, Art In-
stitute of Chicago.

Szarkowski, John. The Idea of Louis Sullivan. Minneapolis:
University of Minnesota Press, 1956. pp. 134-35.

Siegel, Arthur (ed.). Chicago's Famous Buildings. Chicago:
The University of Chicago Press, 1965. p. 141.

D. Supplementary Material:

Copy Book of Business Letter of Louis H. Sullivan, April 2,
1903 - January 9, 1905. Original manuscripts and microfilm
in Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago. Letters con-
cerning St. Trinity Greek Orthodox Russian Church, Chicago,
pp. 141, 143-45, 156-59, 246, 304, 374.

Aug 19 1903.

Prince Nicholas W. Eugatilcheff
56 5th Ave - City:

Dear Prince: Enclosed please find my ctf. for services in full. -
Russian Church. - Under a strict interpretation of my contract
I might exact some \$42. more: but I wish to waive technicalities
and make the church a donation of this extra sum.
Your early reply will oblige.

Truly yours -

Louis H. Sullivan.

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Chicago Aug 26 - 1903
St. Trinity Greek Orthodox Russian Church
Statement of Contract and Payments.

May 20 - 1902	Contract with W.T. & W.I. Clark	
		\$26305.91
July 7 "	certificate	1500.00
July 29 "		2500
Sept. 8 "		3500
Sept. 30 "		4000

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Nov. 22	"	2500
Oct 28	"	4000
Dec 11	"	2500
Dec 31	"	1500
Jan 19 - 1903		200.00
March 12	"	235.
" 19	"	400.
" 20	"	25.
" 20	"	250.
" 20	"	100.
" 20	"	165.79
" 20	"	600.

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March 27 - 1903	certificate	84.00
" 27	"	39.
May 5	"	500.
May 27	"	408.68
June 26	"	989.18
August 19	Extra for catch Basin	27.53
" 19	deduction for delays	357.72
" 19	Approved Extra Bill	770.43
	Certificate in Full	750.00
	\$27104.37	\$27104.37

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August 26th 1903

St. Trinity Greek Orthodox Russian Church
Statement of account with
Louis H. Sullivan Architect

March 21 1902	Contract for services	\$1250.
April 16 "	Cash	\$625.00
September 15 "	"	\$312.50
Aug 26 1903	Bal due	\$312.50
		\$1250. \$1250.00

Received Payment.

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Aug 21 1903

Prince Nicholas W. Eugatiltcheff
Imp. Russian Vice-Consul
56 - 5th Ave - City

Dear Sir: Permit me in acknowledging the receipt of your cheque - \$312⁵⁰ in full of my charge for professional services, to my sincere regret that our very pleasant relations - you as member of the Building Committee, I as architect, for the St. Trinity Russian Church, - have now come to a close - I am quite sincere in this expression of feeling: and in it I indulge Baron M Schlippenbach and the Rev. Kochnoff /sic/, whose

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Aug 26 - '03 N.W.E.

courtesy has amply impressed me.

In this connection I would like to call your attention to a little matter, in the hope it may influence other well-wishers of your church: -

My usual charge for work of this character and cost, (and it is also the standard design of the American Institute of Architects) is 10% (ten per centum) upon the cost. However, my relations with Baron M. Schlippenbach /sic/, yourself, and Mr. Charles R. Crane, have been for years so cordial, and our mutual desire

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Aug 26 - '03 NWE-3.

to see a beautiful little Russian Church erected in this city, so great and enthusiastic, that I consented to do the work for 5% commission - which means - practically - cost to me - and in money terms, a donation of \$1250.⁷⁰ to the church.

I have had no reason what ever to regret this act of mine, and hope, only, that it may influence other well wishers to contribute liberally, so that in the course of the ensuing year or two we may see our beautiful little church decorated in color outside and inside in the rich

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Aug 26-03 - NWE-4

and beautiful way we all have had in mind - This accomplished
your church structure will be one of the most unique and poetic
buildings in the country.

Let us hasten the day!

With sincere regards to yourself and to all your co-workers.

Truly yours
Louis H. Sullivan.

March 14/04

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W.T. & W.J. Clark

Gentlemen.

I desire to call your attention to
a defect in the external plastering on
the front terrace wall of the Russian
Church. Will you kindly look this item
up and see what repairs may be required
to renew this defect.

Yours very truly,
Louis Sullivan

[by Elmslie's hand]

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Aug 17, 1904

Baron M Schlippenbach
Imperial Russian Consul, City

My dear Baron:

Herewith please find the Millets bid for painting in the
Russian Church. I have approved it. Kindly do the same and
it will constitute, I believe a sufficient contract under all
the circumstances.

Truly yours,
Louis Sullivan

N.B. Please return bid to me when signed by yourself.

Enclosure

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Oct 8/04

Ferwell Cornice Co.

Gentlemen. While the painters scaffold is in place will you please send a man to the Russian Church to repair the turret fineals immediately under the crosses on the towers, to that the painting may proceeded with.

Yours very truly,
Louis H. Sullivan

E.
[Elmslie]

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This traditional Russian church in Chicago is an unusual and little-known work by Louis H. Sullivan.
2. Condition of fabric: Good, although most of the exterior ornament has been heavily re-painted and portions of the lattice-work in the belfry are damaged.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The building is roughly rectangular. Reading longitudinally from west to east: rectangular terrace, tower containing narthex, short lateral nave, square central block with inscribed octagon, apse with flanking antechambers; 47' x 98'; one story plus dome and bell-tower.
2. Foundations: These were not visible because of stucco surfacing. They may be concrete. There is a slightly projecting, one-foot high water-table; that portion surrounding the base of the tower is broader and is molded in a deep convex curve.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Common brick originally surfaced with white stucco. The original smooth finish and color is preserved on the faces of the octagonal drum of the dome (same as rectory walls), while the remaining walls are coated with a darker gray stucco that is roughly textured.

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4. Structural system, framing: Brick bearing walls with wood framing above and in the dome and belfry. The dome is carried on eight round brick arches; four squinches provide the structural transition from the rectangular tower to the octagonal belfry.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: There is a broad terrace to the west, providing three steps up to the entrance and rectangular areas on either side of the tower base that are enclosed by the building and low walls. The entrance is protected by a curved canopy with ornamental designs executed in sheet metal and topped by a gilded Russian cross.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Two oak doors at main entrance; steel door to apse at south.
 - b. Windows: All interior church windows are stained glass and sheathed on the exterior by wired glass. The stained glass is leaded in simple geometric patterns, the pre-dominant coloring being gold. The windows in the nave are casement type; those in the apse and dome are double-hung, but do not appear to open; there are three lancets in the tower with a single stone sill. The five apse windows also have stone sills, while the remainder of the windows are surrounded by ornamental moldings in sheet metal. The large glazed surfaces opening to the central block are each broken by a pair of hopper windows set within the stained glass.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Dome and belfry are covered by octagonal roofs with shingled surfaces; the apse, central block, and nave are also shingled, with built-up roofing over the false gables to the west and at the juncture of the octagonal drum with its square base.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: All projecting cornices and eaves are trimmed in ornamental sheet metal with geometric designs and beaded moldings.
 - c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The belfry is an open pavillion surmounted by an octagonal cornice and a cupola with projecting gables. The spire like that of the dome, consists of a bulbous, onion-dome figure in sheet metal topped by a gilded Russian cross.

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C. Detailed Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. Ground floor: Small, square entrance foyer to west; short, broad nave with mezzanine (balcony) set in a lateral, tunnel-vaulted space and supported by two columns; there is a small rectangular counter at the north column. The central worshipping area is a square with inscribed octagon, supporting the semi-circular dome. West of the center is a two-stepped platform which is the bishop's cathedra. The altar rail to the east separates the raised platform of the sanctuary which is reached by three semi-circular steps. A semi-circular apse containing the altar and bishop's throne is behind the doors of the iconostas. On either side is a small room, that to the south leads outside and to the rectory.

b. Balcony and tower: The balcony is stepped. At the rear is a door leading to the tower. Here there are storage closets and a wooden stair leading to the belfry platform.

2. Stairways: There are two wooden stairways to the balcony in the northwest and southwest corners of the church; beneath each is a small closet.

3. Flooring: Wood with later surfacing with tan vinyl tile.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster painted walls with stencil designs, murals, wainscoting in horizontal panels of simulated marble.

5. Decorative features and trim: The ornamental stencil designs on the interior are not typically Sullivan, though very effective in conjunction with the stained glass, murals, icons, oriental rugs, and religious artifacts. There are no pews in the Russian church, with only temporary seating for the infirm.

6. Lighting, type of fixtures: Electrical. A large oriental chandelier hangs by a chain from the center of the dome; on the piers are incandescent candelabras. There are two small fluorescent lights above the balcony.

7. Heating: Originally coal, now oil.

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D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces west with residential streets on the north and west, an alley to the east, and the rectory to the south.
2. Landscaping: The church and rectory form a small corner complex in a quiet, tree-lined neighborhood. Near it on the adjacent corners are two hospitals and another church--all these institutions have tended to maintain the neat appearance of the neighborhood. To the northeast and southwest of the building there are iron fences; there is a six-foot brick wall along the alley. Beside the church and in front of the rectory is a small garden, while the corner is bounded by a sidewalk and Boulevard with grass and heavily foliated trees.

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka, Historian
and Assistant Supervisor
and
J. William Rudd, Supervisory
Architect
National Park Service
June 28, 1965